

July 11, 2003

The Honorable Alfred W. Speer  
Clerk of the House of Representatives  
State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, LA 70804

Re: House Bill No. 2013 by Rep. Townsend  
AQUACULTURE: Provides for the Louisiana Aquaculture Coordinating Council

Dear Mr. Speer:

Aquaculture currently plays a vital role in the economy of Louisiana, and we should continue to make all reasonable efforts to expand it for our future. However, given the experiences in this and other states with the introduction and escape of foreign species and the resultant consequences to wildlife and habitat, it is obvious that the risks of irreversible damage cannot be overstated.

House Bill No. 2013 is an attempt to further the raising and harvesting of aquatic species in Louisiana by the establishment of an aquaculture coordinating council. It proposes a process by which thorough consideration could be given to the identification of additional finfish species suitable for aquaculture in this state. It is obvious that much thought and effort went into the preparation and consideration of the bill as its provisions include an extensive process for consideration of all available information and an enhanced opportunity for public input in the process. I am appreciative to the authors for their consideration of my concerns during the latter days of the session. The result was significantly greater input for the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. However, as not all of the changes I thought necessary were accepted, not all of my concerns are relieved in the final bill.

Louisiana Constitution, Article IX, Section 7, expressly vests control and supervision of the wildlife of this state in the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission. Without approval by the people of a constitutional amendment, this mandate cannot otherwise be delegated. And without a full enforcement role for the commission and the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, I cannot be comfortable that we will have done all that we can to eliminate the risk of irreversible damage to the wildlife of this state.

As I have indicated to the authors of House Bill No. 2013, I share their commitment to increase our efforts to explore acceptable new aquatic species with appropriate conditions of containment. I am

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committed to the establishment, by executive order, of an aquaculture coordinating council along the same lines as the bill with appropriate roles for state agencies.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill No. 2013 and am returning it to the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,

M.J. "Mike" Foster, Jr.

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